



**Written Testimony of Susan Eastwood of Clean Water Action,  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee,  
March 7, 2011.**

Testimony in Support of:  
**Senate Bill 205, AN ACT REQUIRING THERMOSTAT MANUFACTURERS TO  
PAY INCENTIVES FOR THE RETURN OF MERCURY THERMOSTATS**

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and honorable members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Susan Eastwood. I am a resident of Ashford, CT and I work with Clean Water Action and the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut, a group of over 50 non-profits working to phase out toxic chemicals from everyday products.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am here because I strongly support SB 205 AN ACT REQUIRING THERMOSTAT MANUFACTURERS TO PAY INCENTIVES FOR THE RETURN OF MERCURY THERMOSTATS.

I am very concerned about the dangers of mercury in our air, water and food supply. In particular, I am concerned about the failure of product manufacturers to collect and recycle the majority of end-of-life mercury thermostats.

We all know that mercury is a highly toxic and persistent element that has been banned from manufactured goods in many states, including Connecticut. But have you ever wondered what happens to all the mercury in thermostats that were already in use before the ban? Mercury thermostats were built to last about 30 years and about 90% of U. S. households still use them. As they reach their end-of-use, or are replaced by modern programmable thermostats that save the homeowner money on fuel, where does the mercury end up?

Those remaining in homes contain thousands of pounds of mercury. In Connecticut alone, there are about 1.7 million homes still using mercury thermostats. Each contains 3-5 grams of mercury, or about 11,500 pounds of this toxin currently in use in the state. Voluntary recycling programs for end-of-use thermostats recycle an average of 5% of the end-of-life thermostats annually. The rest end up in landfills where they are often burned, releasing mercury into the atmosphere. When it falls into the lakes and streams, fish ingest it, and this has led to multiple warnings for pregnant women and children to avoid

eating fish; a single gram of dispersed mercury is enough to contaminate all the fish in a 20 acre lake.

Since exposure at even low levels causes damage to children and fetuses, it is crucial that we do all we can to prevent further leakage of mercury from old mercury thermostats in landfills. Manufacturers need to step up and dramatically increase their collection rates of mercury thermostats for recycling in a safe and responsible way. Senate Bill 205 in the CT State legislature would require manufacturers to finance a collection and recycling program and pay a \$5 incentive for each mercury thermostat returned for proper recycling. Similar laws passed in Maine and Vermont, have increased the recycling of mercury thermostats dramatically. I urge this Committee and the legislature to pass SB 205 this year and keep future generations safe!

Thank you,

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